

Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

NEWSLETTER



Issue #2

January 2003

The Manager's Message

Hello Everyone,

I wanted to contact you again to share what we've heard during the scoping process and to discuss several other timely topics as we work toward preparing an RMP (resource management plan) for this national monument.

This newsletter details how we organized your scoping comments, it discusses the draft planning criteria we'll use to guide this project, it requests your comments on this draft criteria and it includes a brief sample of the comments we've received.

Since we began the formal scoping process last April, we've received a great deal of information to consider. More than 320 people attended one or more of the 11 scoping open houses we hosted across north central Montana last July and August. We've received more than 400 letters and 5,300 e-mails, and we've visited with many of you at the post office or in the check-out line at the grocery store.

Public resource issues are finding their way to the world-wide stage, and we've received comments from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, 5 Canadian provinces and several foreign countries concerning this monument. Some of the comment letters we received were as brief as a sentence or two, others were more than 25 pages

long. Some were form letters, and others were original. Some conveyed substantive comments, while others conveyed a want or an opinion. However, they all shared an interest in public lands and resources.

We identified more than 1,700 specific comments from this body of information. These comments were organized by category and subcategory as shown in Table 1. The entire 125-page scoping comment summary is available for viewing and/or copying at our web site www.mt.blm.gov. Copies of this summary will also be available for viewing at the sites listed in Table 2. We've also prepared a 30-page scoping report that summarizes these 1,700 comments. It's available at our web site, or by request from the BLM's Lewistown Field Office, the Havre Field Station, the Malta Field Office or the Great Falls Oil and Gas Station.

All of us at BLM appreciate and value your participation in this process and hope you stay involved as we work toward a management plan. This national monument will be managed in a manner that reflects your efforts.

Sincerely,

Gary Slagel, Monument Manager



Table 1
Scoping Comments Were Organized Into These Categories

Resources	Resource Uses (continued)
Resources - General	Recreation
Air Quality	Camping
Cultural Resources	Floating
Fish and Wildlife	Motorized Watercraft
Wildlife Species	Outfitting
Habitat	Hunting
Animal Damage Control	User Fees
Wildlife and Grazing	Non-Motorized Trails
Geology	Transportation
Paleontology	Aircraft landings
Special Status Species (includes Animals, Fish, Plants)	Aircraft Overflights
Species and Habitat Inventories	Roads (General)
Prairie Dog	Roads (Upland)
Sage Grouse	Roads (River Access)
Additional Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species	
Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species and Grazing	Use and Suppression
Soil	Rehabilitation
Vegetation/Native Plants	Ecology and History
Riparian	Risk and Hazard
Upland	
Noxious and Invasive Plants	ACECs
Visual Resources	Wild and Scenic Rivers
Water	Wilderness Study Areas
Resource Uses	Wilderness Evaluation
Resource Uses – General	
Forest Products	Economic
Lands and Realty	Development
Public Access	Communities
Access	Private Land
Utility and Communication Corridors	Facilities
Livestock Grazing	Analysis
Minerals	Health & Safety – Emergency Services
Oil and Gas Activity	Health & Safety – Waste Management
Oil and Gas Resource Value and Monument Lands	Social
Oil and Gas Leasing within Monument	
Oil and Gas Lease Validity	Process – General
Oil and Gas Operations Management	Management
Oil and Gas Impacts within Monument	Conserve
Internal Oil and Gas Requirements	Maintain
Oil and Gas Lease Management	Multiple Use
	Preserve
	Primitive
	Protect
	Restore
	Wilderness
	Planning/NEPA
	Analysis
	Budget/Staff
	Public Involvement
	Regulations
	Outside Scope

Table 2
You Can View A Copy Of The Scoping Comment Summary At These Sites

The Great Falls Public Library
 The Geraldine Library
 The Big Sandy Library
 The Lewistown Public Library
 The Havre-Hill County Library
 The BLM Offices in Great Falls, Havre, Lewistown and Malta

The Winifred Grocery
 The Phillips County Library
 The Chouteau County Library
 The Fort Belknap College Admin. Bldg.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

On December 3, 4 and 5, 2002, about 30 of your friends, neighbors and peers and a handful of BLM staff participated in a partnership workshop in Lewistown. We appreciate very much the time and effort these stakeholders invested in this workshop, and think this effort provided some useful insight into the continued development of a working relationship among agencies and our many stakeholders. We hope to involve these folks further as we begin formulating draft alternatives this coming summer.

Also, we've completed agreements with Blaine, Chouteau, Fergus and Phillips counties and are working on an agreement with the State of Montana, and possibly the Fort Peck Tribes, that will define their roles as cooperating agencies as we work toward completing this resource management plan.

DRAFT PLANNING CRITERIA

These draft planning criteria are the constraints, or ground rules, that guide and direct the preparation of the resource management plan. They ensure the plan is tailored to the identified issues and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria are based on applicable laws and regulations; agency guidance; consultation and coordination with the public; other federal, state and local agencies and governmental entities; and American Indian tribes.

The following draft criteria are for your review. After this public review, they will become proposed

criteria and can be added to or revised as the issues are addressed or new information is presented. The Monument Manager will approve the criteria and any changes.

- The plan will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and all other applicable laws. It will meet the requirements of the establishing Proclamation to protect the Monument's cultural features and natural resources.
- The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument planning team will work cooperatively with the State of Montana, tribal governments, county and municipal governments, other federal agencies, and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. Public participation will be encouraged throughout the process.
- The plan will not address boundary adjustments. Boundaries were established by the President and cannot be adjusted administratively by the BLM.
- The plan will establish the guidance upon which the BLM will rely in managing the Monument.
- The planning process will include an environmental impact statement that will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.
- The plan will emphasize the protection and enhancement of the Monument's natural resources while at the same time providing the public with opportunities for compatible recreation activities.

- The plan will recognize valid existing rights within the Monument and outline the process the BLM will use to address applications or notices filed after completion of the plan on existing claims or other land use authorizations. The plan will include a field development scenario for oil and gas development.
- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents, including grazing and ranching, will be recognized in the plan.
- Any lands located within the Monument's administrative boundary that are acquired by the BLM to accomplish purposes for which the Monument was designated, will be managed consistent with the plan, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.
- The plan will recognize the State's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. The BLM will consult with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks as necessary.
- The plan will include a transportation plan that addresses transportation and access, and will identify where better access is warranted, where access should remain as is, and where decreased access is appropriate to protect Monument resources and manage visitation.
- Laws, regulations, and policies other than the Monument Proclamation guide the management of grazing.
- The plan will incorporate the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. It will include a strategy for ensuring that proper grazing practices are followed within the Monument.
- The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments as necessary and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.
- Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state and federal agencies as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law, and regulations applicable to public lands and the Monument designation.

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE PLANNING CRITERIA

If you have suggestions or concerns about these draft criteria, please send written comments to Monument Manager, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 1160, Airport Road, Lewistown, MT 59457. Your comments would be most useful if received by March 14, 2003.

FUTURE STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The BLM will work to adhere to this RMP schedule.

Analysis of the Management Situation (today through March 2003)

This involves using existing information and information from new inventories to describe the resources, current management and opportunities to resolve issues within the Monument.

Formulation of Alternatives (April 2003 through September 2003)

The BLM will host a series of meetings/open houses/workshops to enable stakeholders to help identify range of reasonable resource uses and management practices to address issues.

Estimating the Effects of Alternatives (October 2003 through May 2004)

This involves estimating the impacts of each alternative.

Selection of the Preferred Alternative (July 2004 through September 2004)

The BLM will have the draft plan available in July 2004, followed by a series of open houses also in July 2004, and a 90-day comment period on the draft.

Selection of the Resource Management Plan (October 2004 through May 2005)

This involves addressing the comments on the draft plan and having a proposed resource management plan available to the public in October 2004 for a 30-day protest period.

A Record of Decision will be signed by the Montana State Director in June 2005; assuming there are no protests.

SAMPLE COMMENTS

These comments illustrate the variety of comments weve received during the scoping period for this RMP.

- This area is critical for wildlife, for historic and cultural values and contains land unparalleled in the Lower 48 states. These values need to be recognized and placed foremost with formal status in the management plan.
- Many tourists floating the river enjoy knowing not only about Lewis and Clarks journey but also the homestead and ranching history.
- You guys at the BLM should manage the Mo River Monument to encourage the return of native species of 200 years ago, and encourage and aid ones that are still dwindling from our touch and impact.
- Control of invasive weeds should be a management priority.
- Re-establish the cottonwood and upland habitats that were seen by Lewis and Clark.
- We need to maintain water development and current use practices in the monument are without further restrictions and limitations on livestock watering and other beneficial uses.
- Any commercial interests derived from the UMRBNM should be reasonable and proportional to what the area will tolerate.
- Develop a strategy to ensure that land management practices (grazing, recreation, etc.) protect water resources.
- I believe we don't need to manage the resource so much as we need to manage the people using and sometimes abusing the resource.
- Private landowners have, and still do express their concern about access to their land that is surrounded by public land.
- Cross-country travel for administration or grazing permit owners should be with the least invasive transportation.
- The Breaks should be managed for as much wilderness character as possible.
- All construction and facilities (oil and gas related) should be in conformance with visual resource management requirements.
- I recognize the need for adequate funding to manage the monument, including enforcement and interpretation.
- Under no circumstances should the BLM manage the monument to achieve a de facto wilderness-like area.
- The section of river from Judith Landing to Kipp should remain in its current primitive condition without well developed campsites and more motorized access.
- I do not believe it is right to include private land in the monument. . . I believe that all private land within the monument should be removed.
- Leave the primitive landing strips in the monument open.
- Monitoring recreation use is important. The concept of Limits of Acceptable Change and sustainability should be implemented.
- The hand of government management should remain as light in this area as it has in the past.
- Fully preserve all roadless areas.
- We have too long allowed surrounding communities to dictate the use of public lands. These lands belong to all Americans and should be protected for all.
- Ban boom boxes.
- I have enjoyed the Breaks for 25 years and would like to see it left as is - no developments or improvements.
- Keep the process of management open and involve local management.

All 1,700 of the specific comments received are available for viewing/copying at www.mt.blm.gov.

Your name will remain on our mailing list unless you want it removed. If you want it removed, please print your name and address clearly below and return this entire page to:

MONUMENT MANAGER
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LEWISTOWN FIELD OFFICE
PO BOX 1160
AIRPORT ROAD
LEWISTOWN, MT 59457

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